

World Bank President on Leadership

In a recent interview with the *Washington Post* newspaper, World Bank President Jim Yong Kim shared his perspectives on leadership. Kim is a physician, anthropologist, former president of Dartmouth College and past director of the World Health Organization's HIV/AIDS department.

Here are some excerpts:

Question (Q): "What was your very first job?"

Kim: "I was a waiter at the Octagon House restaurant in Muscatine, Iowa."

Q: "How have you personally come to define leadership?"

Kim: "One of the most important things about leadership is that you have to have the kind of humility that will allow you to be coached."

"Marshall Goldsmith has coached me free of charge now for about five years. He also coaches Alan Mulally of Ford Motor Company and he coached Mike Duke at Walmart."

"The things you find when the coach talks to all the people you work with is always incredibly humbling. No matter how good you think you are as a leader, my goodness, the people around you will have all kinds of ideas for how you can get better. So for me, the most fundamental thing about leadership is to have the humility to continue to get feedback and to try to get better."

Q: "What's one change you've noticed in yourself and your leadership style?"

Kim: "When you're the leader of an organization, people look at the expression on your face. Your mood has a lot to do with how people think the whole organization is doing."

"I and my friend Mark Tercek from the Nature Conservancy went to get coaching from Alan Mulally. His last words were: 'Mark, Jim, both of you have very nice smiles. I want you to use them more.'

"You really need to express your joy in having the job. You need to express your optimism about what is to come. And you need to express your appreciation and warmth for the people who are every day trying to do their work.' It's something I work on."

Q: "Given your very different background, how much have you tried to adapt to [the World Bank] culture versus how much have you tried to get the culture to adapt to something new brought by you?"

Kim: "One of the lessons of leadership worth emphasizing is that you want to get to know other great leaders and take their advice. At some point in your development, it's only people who've been in the seat of having to be leaders who can help you in a deep way."

"I'm a physician and an anthropologist, but I share with my staff this passion for ending poverty. So I've come to deeply appreciate the fact that we have a thousand economists, because on any given issue I can go to my own team and say, 'Tell me about water and sanitation in India.' And not only will they be able to tell me about the chemistry of the problem, they can tell me about it in the

context of the overall budget of India. They can tell me about it in the context of any given project compared to others. I have come to deeply, deeply appreciate this kind of analytic capacity.”

Photo credit: AP Images
